

In Which She Visits Mama by the-singular-peep

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Summary: Eleven is nervous when she asks if she can, and she is nervous when she does, but there's one thing she knows for certain - and that's that its okay to be nervous around family, even if you've only met them once. [IN WHICH EVERYTHING IS OKAY SERIES. COMPLETE. PT 14/?. PT 13: "IN WHICH HOPPER IS A DANCE MOM."]

In Which She Visits Mama

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May 31, 1985. Friday. June 2, 1985. Sunday.

It had been almost a year, kind of, and Eleven thought that that meant it had been long enough to ask Hopper for an addition to the schedule.

Monday - Stay home all day. Watch *Sesame Street* and *As the World Turns*. Do math and writing and reading, and eat alone. Board Games with Hop, then bedtime story.

Tuesday - Go visit with and Holly. Fold laundry. Practice talking. Read with , play baby dolls with Holly, and eat with friends. Board Games and bedtime story at home.

Wednesday - Watch *Sesame Street* and *Days of Our Lives*. Do math and writing. Find and learn three new words to tell Hopper. Eat alone, but walk with Hopper when he came home at 3-0-0. Movies and board games with Hop afterwards, and bedtime story.

Thursday - Go to the Wheeler's. Wash dishes. Practice speech, read, and play dolls. Eat with friends, and stay a little late to see Mike. Bedtime story at home.

Friday - Stay home all day. Watch her shows, do math, do writing, do reading. Eat alone, but have Mike over for dinner. Watch *Miami Vice* after Mike went home, then sometimes a bedtime story if she wasn't too tired.

Saturday - Friend Day. Go to their houses or have them come to her. The best day, in her opinion, other than Wednesday. Maybe better than Wednesday. No bedtime story or games, because she was usually too tired to hold her eyes open after the day.

And now, for Sunday, Eleven wanted an addition.

She brought it up to Hopper on a Friday night after bidding Mike a farewell and watching their show. It was ten pm, and a little past her

bed time, but she brought it up anyways after she brushed her teeth and while Hopper was waiting for her to get settled for her story.

"Hop." She said plainly, looking at him. Making her eyes meet his, because she felt comfortable with him now, and because she really, *really* wanted this. He looked up.

"What's up, kid?" He asked. Eleven moved her fingers a little in an up and down motion, because she was nervous about asking, and the movement seemed to help. She took a deep breath.

"Want something." She said, testing the waters. Hopper sighed, and that wasn't a good sign.

"Kid, we have you signed up for ballet next month. What more could you want?"

Eleven jittered her hands faster.

"Thank you," She said, because she was thankful. She continued. "Want to... *add* to days."

Hopper didn't say anything, and when she looked at him she knew he was waiting for her to continue. She took a deep breath and scrunched up her eyes, because this was a tall order to ask and she thought maybe if she wished with all her might, Hopper might say yes. Scrunching up your face made wishes work better, you see.

"Want to see Mama, sometimes. Sundays." She paused, then rephrased her last sentence. "Sundays?"

Hopper couldn't believe it. Eleven looked so scared of rejection, and was acting as if she was asking the world of him. He was very surprised that a request to see her *mother* was something she thought he would - something she thought he *could* - say no to. He shook his head.

"Kid..." He started. Eleven's eager face fell, and so Hopper continued quickly. "Of course. Of course we can go see your mama sometimes. Is Sunday what you want?"

Eleven took a minute to just sit in disbelief that he had said yes, and

then nodded emphatically. "Yes. Yes, Hop, please, Sundays to see Mama."

Hopper smiled and reached over to ruffle her hair.

"Whatever you want, Ellie. I'll call Becky first thing in the morning, alright? See what we can do."

Eleven giggled, because it's what she felt like doing, and smiled at Hopper. It was a very, very rare teeth smile, and Hopper was glad to see it. He loved to see Eleven happy. He ruffled her hair again, opened her book, and started reading.

It seemed to take forever to Sunday to arrive, and by forever, Eleven meant *forever*. She wasn't just excited - no, she was excited, and nervous, and scared, and hopeful and every emotion she could possibly feel all wrapped up at once, and that meant that, while she could not possibly wait for Sunday to come, she also wanted it to never arrive. What if Aunt Becky was mad at her for last time?

She hadn't seen her family since November. Not since Hopper had dragged her back there with her tail tucked between her legs to apologize for showing up unexpectedly and leaving even more so. She hadn't talked much then - it was mainly Hopper who spoke. He talked to Becky about Eleven, and had made sure all living arrangements were alright. He had instructed Becky that she was not to speak of Eleven, not to anyone. He told her that Eleven had been terribly *stupid* to come alone, and that she was *sorry* for barging in so unexpectedly. (At this point, he nudged El, to which she looked down at her feet where she was seated at the table and mumbled a "sorry" before scrubbing tears from her eyes with her sweater sleeve.)

Becky had understood, kind of. Only a little bit. Eleven hadn't spoken to her, or hugged her, or seen Mama. She had simply spoken when Hopper prompted and sat to the side while they discussed important matters.

She and Hopper left that day with no love or positive remarks. Becky had said goodbye, and Eleven was sure her aunt was in tears, because she was, too. The ride home had been silent. Eleven was still weak

from *That Night* then, and so she had fallen asleep before they arrived home and had stayed asleep through dinner time.

She and Hopper didn't speak of it the next day, or the next. She hadn't brought her family up since then, either - until the other night. And now it was Sunday, and Hopper had woken her up at seven AM and helped her pick out her outfit, and now they were on their way to 515 Larrabee Road. Eleven felt like she might *throw up*, because she was just so nervous.

"Hop?" She said from the passenger seat, her feet tucked up in criss-cross position and her hands playing in the hem of her skirt. "Belly hurts."

Hopper reached over from his place behind the wheel and placed a hand on her knee without looking away from the road.

"That's just nerves, kid. You'll be alright."

Eleven turned to him with confusion. "Nerves?" She asked. She knew what nerves were; they were the little tendrils in your body that helped you feel things. She didn't quite understand why they would be making her feel sick to her stomach.

"Yeah, nerves. Sometimes if you get too nervous about something, your stomach'll get upset." He paused, then turned his head to look at his daughter. "You'll be fine, girlie. I'll be right there beside you the whole time."

Eleven smiled a very little smile and put her hand on top of Hopper's where it lay on her knee. "Road." She said simply, insinuating a very serious request to "keep his eyes on the road". Hopper just laughed, but he kept Eleven's hand in his as he turned back to the road ahead of them. El looked out the window.

It was a horrid day for this outing, and it made Eleven sad that this was the day she had chosen. It was greatly overcast, meaning the entire outdoor area was coated in this gray, gloomy color that Made Eleven feel sad. And it was drizzling, the kind of precipitation that wasn't quite rain but wasn't quite dry, either. The kind that made you feel yucky on the inside.

Eleven decided that she already felt yucky enough on the inside, thank you, and she wished the weather would pick one or the other instead of being stuck in the middle of rain and shine.

It took another ten minutes to arrive at the Ives residence, and once Hopper pulled the truck into park Eleven was too nervous to get out.

"Hop." She said seriously as he took the keys from the ignition. He looked at her curiously. "Aunt Becky doesn't for...for-give me?" She asked, ducking her head a little. She was very afraid that would be the case, as she had been very rude to steal her money *and* decide not to live with her, all in one day. Hopper laughed a little, and Eleven's eyes widened in concern.

"Kid, Becky's family. She won't hold a grudge. Besides, you weren't really in your right mind that last time, anyways." He reached over and ruffled her hair, an action that Hopper indulged in very often, and Eleven took a deep breath. She looked down at her feet and closed her eyes, just for a second.

"Family."

Eleven let Hopper knock on the door when they reached it, because one of her hands was tucked into one of his and the other was tugging at her hair, wanting to make sure the tiny pigtails were perfect for her visit. (Hopper had done them that morning, and Eleven was very sure that they needed a little assistance after the car ride and Hopper's near decade without practice.)

"Good morning," Becky greeted warmly at the door, and as soon as it opened Eleven was greeted with the warm scent of sugar and baking to match Becky's greeting. "Hello, Jane."

At her name, Eleven noticed that Becky's voice was a little watery. She wanted to return the greeting, but wasn't feeling quite so brave at the moment, so she simply nodded, her eyes trained on Becky's feet as she edged ever-so-slightly behind her companion. The older woman turned her attention to Hopper.

"Thank you for bringing her. Would you like to join us for some cookies? I-I've been baking all day, and I burnt them a little, but I

thought maybe-" But Becky was cut off before she could finish her sentence.

"Yes." Eleven said solemnly. The two adults looked down at her. "Hop loves cookies. He burns them, too."

And then Becky was laughing, and Hopper was lightly smacking the back of her head, and she was giggling, too.

"Come in, come in," Becky smiled, stepping out of the doorway and gesturing for the duo to come through. She pushed her wild hair behind her ear and looked out behind them. "Looks like it's starting to rain."

El followed her gaze as she walked into the door, and smiled just a little. It wasn't sunshine, but at least the weather had picked one. The smile vanished when a large clap of thunder hit, and she nearly jumped out of her skin. Becky smiled and closed the door, and Hopper put a hand on El's back.

"Just a summer shower, kid. You're fine."

Becky led the duo into the kitchen area and gestured for them to sit as she fetched mugs and a plate of cookies. She placed the cookies on the table, and instantly it was obvious that they were burnt. She continued on anyways, pouring milk into the two mugs and setting them in front of her guests before taking a seat herself.

"I'm really glad to see you, Jane," Becky said, a watery smile on her tired face. El looked up from where she was reaching for a cookie, and Hopper nudged her. She gave a little smile.

"Good to see you." Eleven glanced to Hopper for approval, and when he nodded she continued reaching for the cookies and stuffed one into her mouth. She didn't mind the burnt taste; chewing the cookie no matter the taste gave her something to do instead of talking. She swung her feet a little under the table and shook her head so her bangs fell over her eyes, and Hopper instantly reached over and pushed them back.

Becky was still smiling when El was prompted to look back up, but it

looked as if it were wearing thin. Eleven cocked her head.

"Alright?" She asked, and Becky faltered.

"It's just... Next week's your birthday, and..." She trailed off. Smiled.
"Your mama would be so proud of what you've become, Jane."

Eleven gave Hopper a look, and he shrugged in response. She looked back to Becky, confused.

"Birthday?"

Hopper jumped in and put a hand on her back, ignoring Becky's confusion at Eleven's misunderstanding. He'd have to fill her in more later.

"The day you were born, kid, you know that one." He said, and El shook her head. She did know that one, but she didn't know when *her* birthday was. Eleven knew the year she was born because it was on the papers she found under the floorboards, and she and Hopper had discussed it after *That Night*. She was born in 1972, and that meant that she was thirteen this year in 1985, just like her friends. She just assumed her age switched over when it turned 1985, because that made sense. But now, Becky said that her *birthday* was next week. Did that mean she was turning fourteen, if she was already thirteen? She tried to voice her confusion.

"How old?" She asked, and she looked Becky in the eyes because she'd learned that that helped people answer, for some reason. Becky snatched her eyes away from the contact almost instantly and looked up to the ceiling as if it would give her answers.

"Oh, lets see... You'd be...You'll be turning thirteen on the tenth, Jane." Becky turned to Hopper. "Good luck on taking care of a little teenager, Jim."

Eleven heard the sadness in her voice at that sentence, and maybe if she wasn't so worried about her age she would ask why. Instead, she was thinking about what this meant, and so she turned to Hopper because she couldn't find the right words and knew that he would understand what Becky wouldn't.

"Little." She said sadly. "Mike."

Hopper understood what she was getting at. *I'm younger than Mike, and he won't like me.*

"Nah, he won't care." He said, and put an arm around his daughter. He looked to Becky. "Mike's her little boyfriend."

Becky's eyes lit up and she looked to El.

"Oh?"

El scrunched up her face and pushed at Hopper, feeling her face heat up. She smiled bashfully at her aunt, and Becky grinned back.

"That's great, Jane. I'm happy you have him."

There it was again, that little hint of sadness in her voice. Eleven didn't know what it meant, but then she felt the little pang of it, too.

She looked at Becky and she saw everything that could have been. It was like the first time she had been here, except this time she didn't know if she wanted this life like before. Before, all she could see was that she loved Becky. She loved Becky, because she was kind, and nice, and warm, even if she didn't really understand everything. And she loved Terry, because Terry was Mama, and had tried to save her all those years ago and had never stopped. She loved the warm house, and the baby's room with the crib and mobile and stuffed animals, and saw that she could have lived here. She could have grown up here, and played here, and been Jane Ives. Last time she saw what could have been, and that only made her angry. Angry because she didn't have it, angry at Brenner from taking her away from it, angry at Hopper from keeping it from her.

Now, Eleven only felt sadness. That was her. Eleven. She couldn't change that. She knew now that what she had gone through had been awful, and that Brenner was a monster and that she should have never experienced that, but she also knew that what had happened had made her who she was now. If she was Jane Ives, El would have never met Mike. She would have never met Hopper. She would have never been able to make Hopper happy again, because she knew now

that he hadn't been happy since his other little girl was taken. Eleven loved what she saw at the Ives' - it looked like a wonderful life surrounded by wonderful people, but it wasn't her. *She* couldn't be a part of that; only Jane could.

Eleven wasn't happy for the lab. She was far from it, and despised everything that had happened to her there. But she wasn't mad, either, because now everything was okay, and she had a new family. Instead, she was sad, because this was who she *could* have been, and she knew she never would be.

She supposed that's what Becky was feeling, too.

The table had been quite for just a little too long, and to break the silence El reached over and placed her hand on Becky's. Becky jumped. Eleven looked deep into her aunt's eyes, searching for the same sadness and pain she felt. She found it, and clasped her fingers around Becky's, but she couldn't say anything. Becky's face screwed up and she pulled her hand away to wipe her eyes.

"Thank you for bringing her, Jim." Becky said to Hopper after she composed herself. Hopper shrugged.

"This was all the kid's idea, Becky. Don't thank me."

Hopper then looked from Becky to his daughter and back again, and decided they were best left alone for a few moments. He pushed his chair from the table and stood.

"I'm gonna go have a cigarette." He said, and Eleven shot him a look. They had been working on cutting down his habit. But Hopper shot her one right back, one that said, "*I'm giving you space,*" and Eleven nodded. Hopper walked into the hallway and then stepped outside onto the porch, watching the rain as it picked up.

It was storming now, and the rain was getting progressively heavier. Sheets and sheets of it poured, and every few minutes there was another flash of lightning or another rumble of thunder. Wind pushed rain into his face even under the cover of the porch, and Hopper thought briefly of going back in.

But, no, they needed a little bit of time alone. Hopper was smart enough to sense that.

He thought about it as he stood there, rain splashing his face every once and a while, staring at the driveway long enough to obscure the main road from his vision. It was no doubt that Becky wanted Eleven back - That she wanted Jane to come home once and for all. He didn't quite know if she was capable of taking care of a child, especially with Terry under her care, too, but he**, he wasn't either. Especially when he first took El under his wing.

If Becky wanted Jane to live with her, there wasn't really much Hopper could do to stop it. Eleven was, on the birth certificate, Terry and his daughter. She was the legal mother, and that meant she could have custody.

Becky was a reasonable person. Hopper had discussed plans with her the last time they visited, and she had agreed easily. Now, however, Jane was in a position where she could speak for herself, and if Jane wanted to... Hopper couldn't stop her from coming to live with her family. Hopper *wouldn't* stop her from coming to live with her family, because that wasn't right, and El was old enough to decide where she wanted to live. She'd be safe here, and that was all that mattered, but...

Hopper hated to think about it. He didn't know if he'd be able to stand it if Eleven decided to live here. It was an hours' drive away, for one, an even if he visited weekly or daily or if he got weekend visits or whatever, it wouldn't compare to waking her up every morning, or to watching her get overly excited about freezer waffles, or to those hugs he got at the door when he got home. He**, if Eleven left, he'd even miss the syrup she inevitably spilled on the counter every morning, and the midnight questions, and the loud, wordless singing that would disrupt him from his paperwork whenever Eleven was in the shower.

He wouldn't miss the constant fear of stepping on Legos, but that was an outlier and should not be counted.

It had been thirty minutes since Hopper stepped out onto the porch, and since then the storm had only gotten worse. Sighing, he officially

put out his cigarette (he hadn't taken a puff in nearly fifteen minutes) and turned to go inside, bracing himself for the worst. Bracing himself for Eleven coming up to him and bidding him adieu, or for Becky telling him it was time for him to go.

When he stepped into the kitchen again, he didn't see the two he had left there. His eyebrows knit as he looked around, but soon enough he heard his daughter's voice. Ever so quietly, he moved over to the doorway to the living room, and looked in. Becky was nowhere to be found.

On the couch sat Terry, dressed in a pink nightgown with her hair in a bun, her eyes vacant like always and her lips muttering seemingly meaningless phrases. In front of her, curled up on the floor with her hand clasping Terry's tightly, sat Eleven. She was speaking slowly, delicately, as if she were sounding out each syllable before saying it.

"He kissed me. Kissing is when you put your mouth on another mouth. Mike kisses good." Eleven said to Terry. She smiled a little. "Then we danced more. It was pretty. Want you to seen it, Mama."

Hopper realized that she was talking about the Snowball a few months ago, and he smiled too. Eleven had walked out of the gym arm in arm with her friends, and they were laughing so hard that Will had started crying. She was beaming when she got in the car, and Hopper felt sentimental just thinking about seeing her so happy. She looked a kind of sad happy now, but Hopper fought the urge to go comfort her and instead turned to avoid intruding on this private moment. He was greeted by Becky, who was standing a little ways behind him smiling, too.

"She's been talking to her for fifteen minutes, about anything and everything she can think of." She said sadly, her eyes not leaving her sister and niece. "She apologized to me for not talking well. She said you've taught her a lot, though, and that she's learning."

Hopper nodded.

"She's a fast learner."

Becky laughed a little and continued.

"She got that from Terry. Straight A student for years and years before..." Becky swallowed. Paused. Laughed dryly. "That little girl is so much like her mother. It's sad that Terry can't see it."

Hopper nodded. Swallowed. There was something he needed to get off of his chest, something he needed to ask about no matter how much he didn't want to. Becky beat him to it.

"You know, I asked Jane if she wanted to stay here and live with us if you were okay with it."

Hopper's heart picked up the pace. This was it. This is where Eleven left him, and where he went home alone, and had to pack up all of her things so she could move somewhere else. Becky continued, and that sad, sad smile from earlier was back again.

"You know what she said to me? She said, 'Nope. Thank you. ' Becky laughed. "She got that bluntness from me, you know. She told me that you were her home, but could she please visit on Sundays, because that day was free on her schedule. She told me she loved me, but that she loved you too. Don't know how she did it with that limited vocabulary, but she told me everything she needed to." Becky sniffed and wiped at her eyes before turning to look at Hopper instead of at the two in the living room. "You're raising her well, Jim. Thank you so much for that."

Hopper let out a breath he hadn't known he'd been holding and looked back to the two in the living room.

"You know where she was before I got her, right?"

Becky faltered.

"I mean, I - I kinda knew, but not really, no - just... Just the bare minimum."

Hopper didn't wait long to respond.

"She was a test subject. An experiment. This asshole abused her, and kept her hidden away from anyone her own age. He made her scared of herself and everyone else. When she came to me, she wouldn't even say two words at a time, or let me touch her, or anything. She

was cared shitless, and I couldn't blame her." Hopper was growling, slightly, in his last words, because just thinking about Brenner made that happen. "I wish more than anything that she could have grown up here. I'm sorry he took that from you." A pause. "I'm sorry *I* took that from you."

Becky looked Hopper in the eyes and crossed her arms, her face one of holding back tears. Hopper put a hand on her shoulder and closed his eyes tightly, his eyebrows knitting together because he felt her sadness coming at him in waves and he was starting to feel it, too. And then thunder clapped so loudly that the house shook and the two jumped and the power flickered and failed and El let out a blood curdling shriek.

"Hey, hey sweet girl, you're okay, you're okay," Hopper said breathlessly, arriving at Eleven and kneeling beside her before he even had time to think. He knew how scared she was of loud noises, how sometimes they brought her back to the lab, how sometimes she couldn't break out of it alone just like her nightmares. He put his hands on her shoulders and tried to help her sit up straight, because she appeared to be hyperventilating and every book in the room had flown off of their shelves.

Becky was right beside him, and her words of comfort were colliding and mixing with his. Her hands were on Eleven's back and they were petting her shaky form frantically, because, while she had definitely not missed the way that Jane's scream had caused her picture frames to shatter and how books were falling off shelves left and right, her niece was still panicking.

"Jane, shh, shh, it's just thunder, it's okay, it's alright,"

Eleven wasn't any closer to calm. Her body was shaking and she was breathing heavily with her eyes wide. She had snatched her hands away from Terry's and was holding them rigid in front of her, her shoulders hunched as tears began to trickle down her cheeks. Both adults beside her noticed this, and Hopper took action.

"Hey, hey, Ellie, we're gonna count, okay? We're gonna count just like always," He said, because he knew that numbers made sense to El, and that they were something she could focus on to become

grounded again. Becky got it immediately and was right there beside him. She took Eleven's hand as softly as she could and began to pet it.

"One," Hopper said, eyes trained on Eleven's shaking shoulders.

"Come on, Jane," Becky whispered, reaching out and running her hands through El's hair, too. "Calm down, shh,"

"Two," Hopper whispered. "Ellie, count with me. Two,"

"T-two," El breathed out.

They said three together. At ten, Eleven seemed to have gotten her surroundings back. She didn't seem disoriented. Instead, her face crumpled and she made a wet hiccuping sound and fell into both Hopper and Becky for comfort. She cried and cried for a very long time, and both of her guardians stayed calm and collected and just petted her and whispered calming things into her hair as they hugged her back.

By the time the power came flickering back to life, Eleven's tears were nothing but dried tracks on her face, Becky's feet were asleep, and Hopper wasn't able to feel his legs.

"You okay?" Hopper asked, lifting Eleven's chin with his fingers. She nodded, her eyes trained on the carpet as she kept her breath steady.

"Scared. Woods. Alone." *It reminded me of when I escaped from the lab and was in the woods all alone.*

"I know. I know that was scary, but you're here now, with me, and your aunt, and your mama,"

Becky knew she wasn't in the loop enough for this, but it didn't matter. Jane and Hopper were talking, Jane in broken, unclear sentences and Hopper in a warm, fatherly tone, and Becky decided the best thing she could do was leave the pro to it. She could help in some other way.

She stood up quietly and went into the kitchen to make hot chocolate.

By two PM, the four were all seated around the living room watching a movie as the storm continued to rage on outside. Eleven had fallen asleep after her hot cocoa, her head in Terry's lap as the woman stared into space. Hopper was seated beside her, also fast asleep with his head knocked over the back of the couch and his arms outstretched. Becky wasn't far behind them, seated beside her sister with her head on Terry's shoulder, dozing lightly.

It was dark outside as Grease played quietly on the television, with emptied mugs on the floor and sleepy heads finding the coziest place to doze. It was dark outside as Terry Ives' hand twitched, and moved ever so slightly to the left, where it was tangled in her daughter's hair. It was dark outside when she breathed softly, the name barely making a sound on her lips before her mind was whisked away in its loop again.

"Jane."